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CYBERSUMMIT 2021 SESSION DAY 4: RESPONDING TO MIS-, DIS-, AND MALINFORMATION

OCTOBER 27

Responding to Mis- and Disinformation

RENEE DIRESTA
Technical Research Manager
Stanford Internet Observatory



Cybersecurity Summit 2021: Responding to Mis, Dis, and Malinformation



Want more? Watch Day Four.

About the Speaker

Renée DiResta, Technical Research Manager, Stanford Internet Observatory

Renée DiResta is the Technical Research Manager at the Stanford Internet Observatory, a cross-disciplinary program of research, teaching and policy engagement for the study of abuse in current information technologies. Renée investigates the spread of narratives across social and media networks, with an interest in understanding how platform design intersects with user behaviors and crowd dynamics. Her work examines the ways in which distinct actor types leverage the information ecosystem to exert influence - from domestic activists promoting health misinformation and conspiracy theories, to well-resourced full-spectrum information operations executed by state-sponsored actors – and draws on those findings to consider policy, education, and design responses.

Renée has advised Congress, the State Department, and other academic, civic, and business organizations. At the behest of SSCI, she led outside teams investigating both the Russia-linked Internet Research Agency's multi-year effort to manipulate American society and elections, and the GRU influence campaign deployed alongside its hack-and-leak operations in the 2016 election. Renée is an Ideas contributor at Wired and The Atlantic, a 2020 Emerson Fellow, a 2019 Truman National Security Project fellow, a 2019 Mozilla Fellow in Media, Misinformation, and Trust, a 2017 Presidential Leadership Scholar, and a Council on Foreign Relations term member.

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IN RE: STATE OF MISSOURI, ET AL.

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VS.

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JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR., ET AL.

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CASE NO. 322CV01213

10 EVENT: CISA CYBER SECURITY SUMMIT 2021: RESPONDING TO

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MIS, DIS, AND MALINFORMATION

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OCTOBER 27, 2021

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16 (Due to the quality of the recorded media, portions
17 were unable to be transcribed and include inaudible
18 portions. The transcript may also include

19 misinterpreted words and/or unidentified speakers.

20 The transcriber was not present at the time of the
21 recording; therefore, this transcript should not be
22 considered verbatim.)

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24 TRANSCRIBED BY: MELISSA LANE

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1 (CLIP: 0:33-1:49.)

2 RENEÉ DIRESTA: So in August 2020, students
3 from the Stanford internet observatory were doing an
4 internship with CISA and they identified a massive gap
5 in the capability of federal, state, and local
6 governments to become aware of, to analyze, and to
7 rapidly respond to mis and disinformation, both
8 foreign and domestic, targeting the 2020 election.

9 Now that gap had several components. The
10 federal government wasn't prepared to identify and
11 analyze election miss and disinfo. There was no clear
12 federal lead to coordinate the work because the IC, of
13 course, is rightly limited to a foreign focus, and the
14 FBI also has very specific designations limitations.
15 CISA had created support but had no real capability.
16 There were unclear legal authorities, including very
17 real First Amendment questions. There was no
18 expertise resident within the federal government to
19 analyze public content across platforms to identify
20 transient risks. There was a lack of reporting
21 mechanisms for state and local partners to service
22 activity that they saw building in their communities
23 to help them understand it.

24 The federal government was building
25 relationships with tech platforms, but there's a

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1 healthy distrust both ways for good reason. So a
2 trusted nonpartisan partnership with expertise in the
3 way that misinformation moved on public platforms with
4 analysts capable of understanding public conversations
5 and a broader ability to explore publicly available
6 data was needed.

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1 (CLIP: 5:38-5:47)

2 RENEÉ DIRESTA: And while, unfortunately,
3 the vast majority of -- vast majority of voting
4 related misinformation in the 2020 election was
5 domestic, our team evaluated foreign activity as well.

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1 (CLIP: 7:22-7:58)

2 RENEÉ DIRESTA: Following the success of
3 EIP and the certification of the 2020 election, SIO
4 ramped down its monitoring analysis capability because
5 we thought that we were done with that work. However,
6 almost immediately we recognized the need to ramp back
7 up. This time to support government health officials'
8 efforts to combat misinformation and targeting the
9 COVID-19 vaccines.

10 In February 2021, we formally established
11 the virality project drawing on the same partners from
12 EIP and adding a few more, and much like EIP, it
13 focused on realtime observation analysis and
14 understanding of cross platform vaccine-related
15 misinformation.

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1 (CLIP: 9:58-10:44)

2 RENEÉ DIRESTA: We are never going to live
3 in a world free of mis and disinformation. Such a
4 world has never existed, and the government is not
5 going to snap its fingers and regulate the problem
6 away, because misinformation is ultimately speech.
7 And so while there are plenty of conversations now
8 happening about regulation, most have not yet arrived
9 at a solution space that protects civil liberties
10 while reducing harms. And yet, that said, the current
11 situation is also untenable. So we need something
12 in the short term to help create situational awareness
13 for those equipped to counter speak, equipped to
14 correct false and misleading claims, to help insure
15 that the public has access to reliable, accurately,
16 contextualized information and not only from official
17 government sources, and we believe that the power of
18 partnerships hold the key.

19 (Audio ended.)

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1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

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3 I, Melissa J. Lane, Certified Court
4 Reporter of Missouri, Certified Shorthand Reporter of
5 Illinois and Registered Professional Reporter, do
6 hereby certify that I was asked to prepare a
7 transcript of proceedings had in the above-mentioned
8 case, which proceedings were held with no court
9 reporter present utilizing an open microphone system
10 of preserving the record.

11 I further certify that the foregoing pages
12 constitute a true and accurate reproduction of the
13 proceedings as transcribed by me to the best of my
14 ability and may include inaudible sections or
15 misidentified speakers of said open microphone
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17 *Melissa J. Lane*



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19 Melissa J. Lane, CCR, CSR, RPR

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